

then I earned my degree at The Evergreen State College. I will graduate with a master's degree in psychology in August. Not only will I be employable and be able to help others in the mental health field, I will also get to start whittling away at paying old medical bills and my student loans.

Although I will no longer need ObamaCare since I will have health insurance through my employer, the ACA has forever changed the insurance marketplace. The insurers can't charge me more for my preexisting condition like they could before.

If the ACA had been in place when my husband died, I would have been able to keep my business on the Oregon coast. If the ACA had been in place when my husband died, I would have immediately qualified for insurance under the ACA, and I may have been able to keep our house. I want you to know, I am not lazy. I am a determined, self-improving mom who is raising her son alone. Before the ACA, I had to decide whether to pay for insurance or food. I depend on the ACA.

That is the letter from Sherry.

Madam Speaker, this past Saturday, I had the opportunity to meet with more than 300 of my constituents who support accessible, affordable health care in our country. I heard from many, but still a small portion of the 750,000 Washingtonians who gained coverage through the ACA.

The ACA is working for many people across America, and Congress should not reverse the progress we have made under it. That being said, I know there are parts of the ACA that could be improved upon. We all know that. We can and should make improvements in order to make healthcare insurance more affordable and more accessible to more people across our Nation. As we began this Congress, I had hope that we could have a productive, bipartisan discussion about the steps we could take to do just that, but I was saddened and, frankly, dismayed by the lack of serious policy efforts from my friends on the other side of the aisle.

Well, the majority finally released their proposed replacement for the ACA, the so-called American Health Care Act, after weeks of hiding this secret bill behind closed doors. Frankly, I am not impressed by the bill. This bill offers no attempts to improve healthcare coverage or insurance coverage, no attempts to reduce healthcare costs or the rate of inflation. This bill allows insurance to charge older people more while, at the same time, reducing the subsidies for many of those very same people. The bill was presented without any indication of how it will affect our budget or how many people will be kicked off their insurance under this plan.

This bill does not address the barriers that prevent working class and middle class people from accessing and securing health insurance. In fact, the bill would likely put health insurance out of reach for millions of Americans who are in the working and middle classes.

Madam Speaker, to earn the label "American," a bill had better be exceptional. The American Health Care Act is a lot of things, but exceptional is not

one of them. People like Sherry are exceptional. Let's put Sherry and people in her circumstances first.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 39 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

God of the universe, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We ask Your blessing upon us this day. During these days, the American people can see the difficulties of legislating for this great Nation of ours. Disagreements between and within parties emerge when important and sweeping laws are being considered.

So also the push and pull of local, State, and national governmental interests and responsibilities can be seen to contribute to the enormity of our way of government. Be it health care or immigration, the wisdom of our Founders can perhaps be seen in their designing a governmental process that is difficult, resistant to hasty solutions, and demanding of those who engage.

May the American people be patient with and supportive of this process, and may the Members of this House, especially, merit the trust of their constituents, those who voted for them and those who did not.

And may all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. WOODALL led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT

(Mr. COLLINS of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in gratitude—yes, gratitude—for the opportunity that we have to serve the American people and by beginning the process of repealing and replacing ObamaCare.

As Republicans, we understand that even \$1 trillion in new taxes—as the Affordable Care Act dropped on our friends and families—cannot save a healthcare system that is based on government interference and overreach. We as conservatives defend compassion, fairness, and freedom. These values are mutually inclusive, and I submit the American Health Care Act is a case study in their application.

As insurance markets contract and healthcare options for Americans evaporate across the country, Medicaid continues to give more Federal dollars toward able-bodied Americans than toward the elderly and disabled neighbors that the program was designed to help.

ObamaCare has ushered in a brave new world of diminished health care and skyrocketing costs, and we cannot let these directives stand. Republicans are protecting our most vulnerable neighbors by putting conservative principles back in place. Limiting government, thoughtful budgets for Federal programs, free markets, and choices are the best medicine we have to bring relief to struggling Americans, and we are here to deliver.

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans have introduced their healthcare plan. The President said it would be better and more cost effective than the Affordable Care Act and it would offer insurance to everybody.

Well, if you believe that, you believe the President has got a secret plan to defeat ISIS which he was going to give us within 30 days, that there were thousands of Muslims in New Jersey cheering 9/11, and that President Obama was born in Kenya. It is not true.

What the plan they have introduced is is something that will give the wealthy unbelievable tax breaks. The 400 wealthiest people in America will get tax breaks of \$7 million apiece; and the Americans who earn \$200,000 a year or less will get none of those breaks, but they will pay more for their insurance and get less for it.

The fact is property taxes will go up as less and less people are covered by insurance and they go to emergency rooms for primary care; and as hospitals give more uncompensated care, they have to raise your insurance rates in public hospitals and raise your property taxes.

The American Hospital Association has come out against this. The American Medical Association has come out against this. Next thing you know, the people living the lifestyles of the rich and famous at Mar-a-Lago will come out against it.

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Elizabeth Oddy returned from east Africa after spending 2½ years as a Peace Corps volunteer. Before returning home, she was examined by a Peace Corps physician. She was deemed healthy and okay to come back to America.

Two days after coming home, Elizabeth went to her doctor for a regular checkup where she was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. She had stage I thyroid cancer. Her Peace Corps insurance ended the next day.

Peace Corps volunteers often have severe health problems upon their return from abroad. Health issues that are a direct result of serving in the Peace Corps should be covered by the Peace Corps.

Volunteers like Elizabeth are the spirit of humanitarian assistance. It is our responsibility to ensure they are properly cared for both at home and abroad.

My bill, the Sam Farr Peace Corps Enhancement Act, improves health care for all current volunteers and returned Peace Corps volunteers that contract illnesses during their service. We must continue providing support for our American angels abroad.

And that is just the way it is.

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I am deeply troubled and disappointed that Republicans have chosen to move forward with their plans to dismantle the Affordable Care Act rather than working in a bipartisan fashion to improve this landmark legislation.

Republicans have had 7 years to work across the aisle to find solutions. Instead, they have chosen to ignore the ACA's success in pursuit of their single-minded focus on gutting the law. They have voted over 60 times to repeal the ACA. Could not even one of those votes have been to try to improve it if they saw these shortcomings?

Mr. Speaker, the ACA expanded healthcare access to over 100,000 Rhode Islanders and 20 million people nationwide who otherwise did not have health insurance. Unfortunately, the Republican proposal jeopardizes the comprehensive, affordable, quality coverage Americans received under the ACA.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican plan will lead to higher costs and less accessible coverage, and it will strain, not strengthen, our healthcare system. Their plan disproportionately harms seniors, people with disabilities, and those who rely on Medicaid.

I have long said, Mr. Speaker, that the ACA isn't perfect, but it is an important first step toward fulfilling our Nation's promise of compassion and opportunity because health care is a necessity. It is something that is a right, not a privilege. Unfortunately, the Republicans' American Health Care Act will break this fundamental promise by undermining the healthcare coverage of millions.

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT

(Mr. WOODALL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I rarely come down during the 1-minute time of the day, and I am glad I came down this morning for Father Conroy's prayer because there really is a lot of anxiety in this country as it relates to health care. Every family in this country has health care on their mind.

The gentleman from Rhode Island is exactly right. We have an opportunity to work together to fix it because we all know the ObamaCare system is failing. That is why we talk about how to fix it because we know that it is failing.

President Trump said on Monday that the Republican alternative is now open for review and negotiation. He didn't say take it or leave it. He didn't say pass it before you can read it. He said open for review and negotiation.

I challenge my colleagues to think about our opportunity to serve not just one constituent, but all of our constituents. Think about our opportunity to come together and put this healthcare discord behind us for a generation.

I thank Father Conroy for that admonition this morning. I hope we will rise to that challenge.

EPA PUGET SOUND BUDGET CUTS

(Ms. JAYAPAL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I strongly oppose potential deep cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency.

According to many recent press reports, the EPA budget to restore our critical Puget Sound in my home State of Washington is facing a 93 percent

cut. What is worse is the EPA, overall, is potentially facing a 25 percent budget cut, resulting in a loss of 15,000 jobs.

Let us be clear that the EPA is the entity that ensures clean air, clean water, and strong human health. Because of the EPA's work on accountability and oversight of strong environmental regulations, we have seen progress on pollution mitigation, shoreline restoration, water treatment, and education projects that are aimed at protecting our sound and our environment.

This administration's cuts will be devastating to our environment. By signing an executive order to move forward on Keystone and the DAPL pipeline, appointing Scott Pruitt to lead the EPA, and rolling back environmental regulations, we are showing overt hostility to protecting our environment.

We need to be investing in our environment and not slashing it, and we need to make sure that we restore our environment and preserve it for our future generations.

NORWICH BOYS BASKETBALL SECTION 4 CHAMPIONS

(Ms. TENNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, today I am honored to rise and recognize and congratulate the new Section 4, Class B boys' basketball champions, the Norwich Purple Tornadoes. The hard work, dedication, and sportsmanship of these young men helped lead their team to claim the Section 4 victory for the second year in a row.

In the game against the Waverly Wolverines, senior forward Chris Jeffrey scored 17 hard-fought points, taking Norwich into the second half leading 18-17. In the final half, Norwich took the court by storm to claim the title of Section 4 champion with a final score of 49-35.

On behalf of the 22nd District, congratulations to Norwich and Coach Brian Collier on an outstanding win. We wish you luck in the State quarter-final on March 11 against the Section 3 champions.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND A DAY WITHOUT A WOMAN

(Mrs. BEATTY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of International Women's Day and to join the countless women across this Nation in participating today and, yes, dressed in red to celebrate our achievements of women across the world in many fields.

I stand with the women today to highlight the economic injustices women face: unequal pay, unpaid leave, gender discrimination, and the list